

Economic Development Advisory Council

4.16.14 Meeting minutes

Americana Room – Hampshire Hills

Minutes approved on May 21, 2014

Present:

Matt Ciardelli, Ciardelli Fuel Co
Chris Costantino, Conservation Commission
John McCormack, TIFD
Lyle Fulkerson, HPM Insurance
Wendy Hunt, Milford Improvement Team
Heather Leach, Centrix Bank
Penny Seaver, Bean Seaver & Smith
Sean Trombly, Trombly Gardens
Dale White, Leighton A White, Inc.

Excused:

Michael Brisebois, Hitchiner Mfg Co
Rosie Deloge, Milford School System
Janet Langdell, Planning Board
John Siergiewicz, Hollis Line Machine
Mark Fougere, Board of Selectmen
Shirley Wilson, Administrative Ass't

Bill Parker, Director Community Development

M. Ciardelli called the meeting to order at 7:30AM.

Minutes:

S. Trombly made a motion to approve the minutes of January 29, 2014, seconded by C. Costantino. All in favor.

Economic Development Survey Status and Update

H. Leach reported that the survey subcommittee had met on April 7th to discuss writing the final analysis, findings, and recommendations and noted she is responsible for the rough draft which will then be provided to B. Parker to finalize. The report should be ready within the next two-three months.

UNH Co-operative Extension – Business Retention and Expansion Program

B. Parker reported that he had committed to work on this project, being spearheaded by ex-EDAC member Tracy Hutchins, Executive Director of the Souhegan Valley Chamber of Commerce, as its goal is in line with the EDAC vision statement “...to develop a diversified, growing, and sustained economy by supporting existing businesses and employers...”. The project is a joint effort between the Chamber, the Town of Amherst, and Milford. B. Parker said he is looking for involvement from EDAC as the primary economic development group in Town, and would consist primarily of a business visitation program in which volunteers would visit local businesses and to survey concerns and barriers to survival and growth. The BR&E process includes three steps: firm visits by local community leaders who are trained to conduct a proven survey tailored to the local community. This step also includes a Task Force for immediate follow-up to review survey results and response to the business.

The second step is ‘strategic planning’ and UNH faculty or other experts computerize the information and prepare an initial draft report for the Task Force. The report will contain data analysis and suggests recommendations for improving the local business climate which is then utilized by the Task Force to develop an action plan to assist in business expansion and retention. The third step is implementation. The entire process takes 2-3 years.

B. Parker noted that the program has a cost of \$2000, of which the Chamber is seeking a NH Charitable Foundation grant for \$1000, and both Milford and Amherst are matching with \$500 each.

H. Leach expressed that she liked the partnering with Amherst on this. B. Parker then said that he would be meeting again with T. Hutchins and S. Marchant, Amherst Community Development Director, and would talk about the program again at the next EDAC meeting and would be seeking EDAC volunteers.

West Elm Street Water Line Extension: Planning for 2015 Warrant

Following up on EDAC’s efforts to support infrastructure improvements D. White reported that the Water and Sewer Commission authorized expenditure for engineering plans for the water line extension on West Elm

Street/101 and that the draft plans are ready for distribution. The Commission will likely go out for bid on the construction this coming fall for a cost to include on a proposed warrant article. D. White reiterated that the Selectmen had been supportive of this project and it will be included in the Capital Improvements Plan. The project's intent is to provide a reliable municipal water source in a commercial area where wells are problematic, and that extension of this water line will support economic development and added value both to existing businesses and vacant land owners along this corridor. Additionally, the project will provide a significant step towards an intermunicipal connection with Wilton, benefitting both towns, even though currently Wilton is reluctant to move forward on the connection. D. White stated that as a Milford commissioner he intends to continue talks with Wilton. D. White said he is optimistic this project will move forward and is working with B. Parker on funding options to offset the possible bond. J. McCormick asked what the cost is estimated at, at D. White replied \$500k to \$750k would be a rough estimate. W. Hunt asked where the water lines currently terminate, and D. White said in Milford the line ends at Jones Crossing and in Wilton at the Pine Valley Mill. The new project would stub the water line at the restaurant at 101/Wilton Road.

There was additional discussion about the Wilton water system and D. White explained that Wilton has two municipal wells off Rte. 31 that may be potential high hazard due their proximity to the highway and minimal storage capacity. Milford has a great supply of water backup and storage. D. White said that continued EDAC support of this project is critical.

EDAC Work Plan/Priorities for 2014

M. Ciardelli then turned the discussion over to what are EDAC's work priorities for 2014. W. Hunt stated that the vacant spaces tour co-sponsored by the Milford Improvement Team and the Chamber of Commerce was deemed a successful first effort and Penny Seaver, a participant, expressed that she had several visitors to the properties she had made available. It was noted that the panel of local town of Milford and Amherst planning and building officials and a local banker, Ed Killiam, was very helpful for those in attendance.

H. Leach brought up the need to focus on a business/economic development website and B. Parker said it was a Community Development Office goal to establish one.

M. Ciardelli reported that he and D. White had met with the Town Administrator to discuss two recent situations where questions and concerns were raised about building permit requirements and that their questions had been answered.

D. White mentioned inviting Karl Norwood, well-known and established commercial realtor and founder of the Norwood Group to an upcoming EDAC meeting to talk with the group about Milford's efforts and potential for development. He offered to set this up with the assistance of B. Parker.

L. Fulkerson stated that he was involved with a Small Business Administration group that includes a wide range of professionals such as bankers, lenders, and insurance people and suggested that EDAC support a panel discussion for people interested in starting a business. He offered to bring back more information on how the group operates and how this event could happen.

D. White mentioned the idea of establishing an 'ambassador' program which had been mentioned at prior EDAC discussions. The intent would be a small group that would get the message out that Milford is a good place to do business. There was some discussion and the group felt there was work to be done first regarding demographics, opportunities, and developing a marketing message but that this effort would be very worthwhile. Wendy, Dale, Penny, and Lyle offered to work on this.

J. McCormack suggested a follow-up on the prior Policies and Procedures work with Town departments. There was some discussion on this as it was acknowledged that many improvements have been implemented. B. Parker stated that several departments feel they are being 'watched' based on only a couple of very specific situations and that has brought up concerns.

H. Leach mentioned that it was important to get the word out to the public and business community how Milford's tax rate compares to similar communities.

Development Update

B. Parker reported that development is definitely picking up based on permits, Planning Board activity, and internal meetings with developers and property owners. Current activity includes completion of the Pine Valley Lofts, start of a 5-lot subdivision off Melendy Road, the approval of the commercial rezoning off South Street for Salt Creek properties with two or three near term sites in the works, Mi Jalisco expansion at Lorden Plaza, possible 9300 SF auto repair facility on Elm Street, the new Fieldstone Land Consultants office on Elm Street, Milford Medical Center expansion, and possible retail across from the Pine Valley Mill.

Other Business

L. Fulkerson let the group know that HPM Insurance was sponsoring an electronics recycling event on Tuesday, April 22nd and EDAC members were welcome to bring items for recycling.

The group thought that it would be good to invite Karl Norwood to the next meeting, tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, May 14th.